

Europäisches Patentamt  
European Patent Office  
Office européen des brevets



(11) **EP 1 440 867 A1**

(12) **EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION**

(43) Date of publication:  
28.07.2004 Bulletin 2004/31

(51) Int Cl.7: **B62D 21/15**

(21) Application number: **03001640.6**

(22) Date of filing: **24.01.2003**

(84) Designated Contracting States:  
**AT BE BG CH CY CZ DE DK EE ES FI FR GB GR  
HU IE IT LI LU MC NL PT SE SI SK TR**  
Designated Extension States:  
**AL LT LV MK RO**

(72) Inventors:  
• Janevik, Peter  
415 14 Gothenburg (SE)  
• Hörling, Petter  
414 66 Gothenburg (SE)

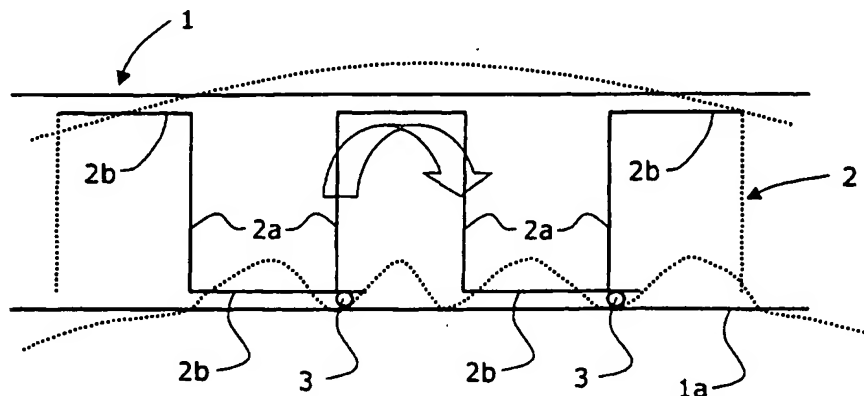
(71) Applicant: **Ford Global Technologies, Inc.**  
Dearborn, MI 48126-2490 (US)

(74) Representative: **Egeröd, Lisbeth et al**  
**Ström & Gulliksson IP AB**  
Lindholmospiren 5  
417 56 Gothenburg (SE)

(54) **Structural design component for automotive vehicles**

(57) The present patent application relates to a hollow elongated structural design component (1) for automotive vehicles. The component (1) has a portion bendable when a collision load is applied in a longitudinal direction of the thereof, which portion has an initial closed cross-section essentially orthogonal to said longitudinal direction. The component (1) comprise means (2a) arranged to, during the initial stages of bending, es-

entially maintain the initial cross-section of said portion. A characterizing feature of the component is that it further comprise means (3) arranged to, during the initial stages of bending, induce local buckling at multiple distributed locations along a delimiting wall (1a) of said structural design component (1) arranged to, upon bending, being subject to negative pushing stresses. Hereby an increased energy absorption during bending collapse of the member (1) is provided for.



**Fig. 5**

## Description

### Technical field

[0001] The present patent application relates to a structural design component and in particular a structural design component for automotive vehicles having improved crash performance in accordance with the preamble of claim 1.

### Background of the invention

[0002] As design constraints of car structures and structural members are continuously made tougher, it is becoming increasingly difficult to design different structures, such as front and rear side rails and shotgun members, for optimum crash performance. The constraints often make it impossible to design for a buckling collapse of the structures, which is usually the optimal approach from a weight optimization perspective. Members having a pre-bent shape, for example, does normally not support a buckling deformation. As a result, bending collapse of the member becomes the only remaining option. However, this comes at a high price, as the energy absorption in a bending mode is rather ineffective per mass unit of structure as compared to buckling collapse. Several proposals have been made to increase the energy absorption in a bending mode.

[0003] One such device which is arranged to increase the energy absorption in a bending mode is previously known through US 3 827 712, in which is described a structural frame capable of absorbing impact energy, which comprises a structural frame member of metallic material defining closed rectangular cross-section. Portion of each of the structural frame members is bent in the direction perpendicular to the longitudinal direction of the frame and energy absorption materials of metallic material with bowl-shaped projections are attached to those two opposing inner surfaces of the frame members which oppose in the direction of bending so that the bowl-shaped projections abut against each other. Upon collision, due to the resistance to plastic deformation of the bowl-shaped projections the shape of the cross-section of the structural frame may be maintained in its initial state and no abrupt decrease of bending moment takes place.

[0004] A disadvantage with the arrangement known from the prior art mentioned above is that it will increase the longitudinal bending resistance of the pre-bent structural frame member, why special consideration and reinforcement of the attachment points between the pre-bent structural frame member and the adjacent members will be required. This will usually result in an undesired overall weight increase.

### Summary of the invention

[0005] One object of the invention is to provide an im-

proved structural design component and in particular an improved structural design component for automotive vehicles providing for increased energy absorption during bending collapse of the member addressing the problems described in relation to the prior art arrangement.

[0006] This object is achieved in accordance with the characterizing portion of claim 1.

[0007] Thanks to the provision of means for inducing local buckling at multiple locations along a delimiting wall of a structural design component being subject to negative pushing stresses during bending, which means does not contribute to the longitudinal stiffness of the structural design component in any significant amount, the energy absorption during bending collapse of the structural design component can be increased while at the same time the peak force level can be essentially maintained, such that no special consideration and reinforcement of the attachment points between the structural design component and the adjacent members will be required. Thus, energy absorption will be increased without any significant weight increase.

[0008] Preferred embodiments are listed in the dependent claims.

### Description of drawings

[0009] In the following, the invention will be described in greater detail with reference to attached drawings, in which:

[0010] Fig. 1 is a simplified side view of a structural design component in the shape of a elongated hollow sheet metal beam not incorporating the invention,

[0011] Fig. 2 is a schematic illustration of the typical force characteristic over displacement for the case illustrated in figure 1,

[0012] Fig. 3 is a simplified side view of a structural design component in the shape of a elongated hollow sheet metal beam incorporating the invention,

[0013] Fig. 4 is a schematic illustration of the typical force characteristic over displacement for the case illustrated in figure 3,

[0014] Fig. 5 is a structural design component comprising a deformation control element in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention.

[0015] Still other objects and features of the present invention will become apparent from the following detailed description considered in conjunction with the accompanying drawings. It is to be understood, however, that the drawings are designed solely for purposes of illustration and not as a definition of the limits of the invention, for which reference should be made to the appended claims. It should be further understood that the drawings are not necessarily drawn to scale and that, unless otherwise indicated, they are merely intended to conceptually illustrate the structures and procedures described herein.

### Description of embodiments

**[0016]** A simplified side view of a structural design component in the shape of a elongated hollow sheet metal beam 1 not incorporating the invention is shown in figure 1. Full lines illustrates the beam 1 prior to being subject to a bending collapse mode and the dotted lines illustrates the beam 1 being subject to a bending collapse mode.

**[0017]** Fig. 2 shows the typical force F characteristic over displacement D for the case illustrated in figure 1. During the initial force buildup, the force will increase rapidly and linearly as the displacement progresses. The peak force F' is basically a factor of the geometry through the section bending stiffness, the length of the beam 1 and the modulus of the material.

**[0018]** Once the peak F' force is reached, a global bending buckling mode is developed, in this case corresponding to the second Euler case. The force F then drops rapidly due to localized buckling developing on the side of the beam 1 having negative (pushing) stresses.

**[0019]** The local buckling coupled with the advent of bending moments in the beam 1 results in a loss of section in the beam 1 combined with an increase in stress levels due to the bending moments. The net effect is a very rapid loss of force carrying ability when the displacement D is increased.

**[0020]** The force F eventually drops down to a residual level, this level being mainly a factor of the tensile stress of the material, the length and width of the beam 1 combined with the material thickness.

**[0021]** Figure 3 illustrates a structural design component in the shape of a elongated hollow sheet metal beam 1 according to figure 1 incorporating a deformation control element (not shown) according to the invention. Full lines illustrates the beam 1 prior to being subject to a bending collapse mode and the dotted lines illustrates the beam 1 being subject to a bending collapse mode.

**[0022]** As illustrated in figure 3, the arrangement according to the invention results in the beam 1 buckling in multiple places in stead of one. The result is that there is an increased energy absorption during collapse.

**[0023]** The deformation in accordance with figure 3 is achieved through providing inside the beam 1 a deformation control element having means for keeping the cross-section thereof up at a certain level, although local buckling has started. Hereby the force level is kept up after buckling has been initiated. The deformation control element further has means for causing the beam 1 to develop local buckling in multiple places, whereby the energy absorption of the design is optimized.

**[0024]** By designing the deformation control element in such a way that it does not contribute to the beam 1 longitudinal stiffness in any significant amount, a preserved peak force level can be achieved. Hereby the need for special considerations and reinforcements of

the attachment points between the beam and any surrounding structures can be eliminated.

**[0025]** The deformation control element can also be designed to be somewhat deformed during the final stages of the bending collapse, which will also contribute somewhat to the energy absorption of the design.

**[0026]** In figure 4 the typical force characteristic over displacement for the case illustrated in figure 3 is illustrated.

**[0027]** During the initial force buildup, the force will increase rapidly and linearly as the displacement progresses essentially corresponding to figure 2. As with the beam of figure 1, the peak force F' is basically a factor of the geometry through the section bending stiffness, the length of the beam 1 and the modulus of the material.

**[0028]** Once the peak force F' is reached, multiple bending buckling modes are developed. The force F then drops less rapidly as compared to figure 2, (also shown with dotted lines in figure 4), due to distributed buckling developing on the side of the beam 1 having negative (pushing) stresses.

**[0029]** The distributed buckling coupled with the presence of section maintaining means in the beam 1 results in a delayed loss of section in the beam 1. This results in a slower loss of force carrying ability when the displacement D is increased.

**[0030]** The force F eventually drops down to a residual level, this level being higher than that of the beam 1 in accordance with figure 1.

**[0031]** In figure 5 is illustrated a possible design of a structural design component 1 comprising a deformation control element 2 in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention. The deformation control element 2 is illustrated in a cut through side view of the hollow sheet metal beam 1 of figure 3.

**[0032]** The beam 1 has a portion bendable when a collision load is applied in a longitudinal direction thereof. An initial closed cross-section of the beam 1 is essentially orthogonal to the longitudinal direction of the beam 1.

**[0033]** Inside the hollow sheet metal beam 1 is arranged the deformation control element 2, which provide means 2a arranged to, during the initial stages of bending, essentially maintain the initial cross-section of said bendable portion. These means 2a are here shown as part of the longitudinally extending deformation control element 2, and realized as multiple longitudinally spaced apart sheet members 2a arranged within said beam 1 essentially orthogonal to the longitudinal direction thereof and essentially filling out the initial closed cross-section thereof. These sheet members 2a are designed to keep the cross-section of the beam 1 up during the initial buckling.

**[0034]** The sheet members 2a are spaced apart by essentially longitudinally extending spacing sections 2b of low bending stiffness, also part of the deformation control element 2. Each of said spacing sections 2b in-

terconnect two of said sheet members 2a along an inner delimiting wall of said beam 1. The spacing sections 2b alternately are arranged along opposing inner delimiting walls of said beam 1, in order to minimize any contribution to the bending stiffness thereof.

[0035] The deformation control element 2 further provide means 3 arranged to, during the initial stages of bending, induce local buckling at multiple distributed locations along a delimiting wall of said beam arranged to, upon bending, being subject to negative pushing stresses. This local buckling at multiple distributed locations during bending collapse is illustrated with dotted lines in figure 5.

[0036] The means 3 for inducing local buckling comprise longitudinally spaced apart interconnections 3 between said longitudinally extending deformation control element 2 and said delimiting wall of said beam 1, which wall is arranged to, upon bending, provide an inner radius of curvature of said portion being subject to negative pushing stresses. The deformation control element 2 is connected to the beam 1 at locations where the bending stiffness of the deformation control element 2 is low, here illustrated as portions of the spacing sections 2b projecting slightly past the sheet members 2a, thus the stiffness contribution to the beam 1 is kept to a minimum. These interconnections 3 can also be arranged between at least two of the sheet members 2a and the delimiting wall of the beam 1. Alternatively these interconnections 3 can be arranged between at least two of said spacing sections 2b and said delimiting wall of the beam 1.

[0037] The interconnections 3 further are arranged only at the side of the deformation control element 2 facing the side of the beam 1 intended to provide the inner radius of curvature during bending collapse, i.e. the side of the beam being subject to negative pushing stresses during bending. These interconnections 3 can be achieved in any suitable way, e.g. through welding, gluing or any other suitable method of interconnection known to the person skilled in the art. In the case of both the beam 1 and the deformation control element 2 being steel sheet metal structures, welding is usually the preferred method of interconnection.

[0038] The deformation control element 2 must be continuous throughout the distance where the bending radius is designed to appear to have the desired effect of causing multiple distributed bending buckling modes during bending.

[0039] The invention is not limited to the above-described embodiments, but may be varied within the scope of the following claims.

[0040] Thus, while there have been shown and described and pointed out fundamental novel features of the invention as applied to a preferred embodiment thereof, it will be understood that various omissions and substitutions and changes in the form and details of the devices illustrated, and in their operation, may be made by those skilled in the art without departing from the spirit

of the invention. For example, it is expressly intended that all combinations of those elements and/or method steps which perform substantially the same function in substantially the same way to achieve the same results are within the scope of the invention. Moreover, it should be recognized that structures and/or elements and/or method steps shown and/or described in connection with any disclosed form or embodiment of the invention may be incorporated in any other disclosed or described or suggested form or embodiment as a general matter of design choice. It is the intention, therefore, to be limited only as indicated by the scope of the claims appended hereto.

## Claims

1. A hollow elongated structural design component (1) for a vehicle body having a portion bendable when a collision load is applied in a longitudinal direction of the component (1), said portion having an initial closed cross-section essentially orthogonal to said longitudinal direction, said component (1) comprising means (2a) arranged to, during the initial stages of bending, essentially maintain the initial cross-section of said portion, **characterized in, that** said component (1) further comprise means (3) arranged to, during the initial stages of bending, induce local buckling at multiple distributed locations along a delimiting wall (1a) of said structural design component (1) arranged to, upon bending, being subject to negative pushing stresses.
2. A structural design component (1) according to claim 1, **characterized in that** said means (2a) for maintaining the initial cross-section and said means (3) for inducing local buckling are part of a longitudinally extending deformation control element (2) arranged within said component, which deformation control element (2) is continuous throughout said portion.
3. A structural design component (1) according to claim 1 or claim 2, **characterized in that** said means for maintaining the initial cross-section comprise at least two longitudinally spaced apart sheet members (2a) arranged within said structural design component (1) essentially orthogonal to said longitudinal direction and essentially filling out the initial closed cross-section.
4. A structural design component (1) according to claim 3, **characterized in that** said sheet members (2a) are spaced apart by essentially longitudinally extending spacing sections (2b) of low bending stiffness.

5. A structural design component (1) according claim 4,  
**characterized in that** each of said spacing sections (2b) are arranged along an inner delimiting wall of said structural design component (1) and interconnect two of said sheet members (2a). 5
6. A structural design component (1) according to claim 5,  
**characterized in that** said spacing sections (2b) alternately are arranged along opposing inner delimiting walls of said structural design component (1). 10
7. A structural design component (1) according to claim 2,  
**characterized in that** said means for inducing local buckling comprise longitudinally spaced apart interconnections (3) between said deformation control element (2) and said delimiting wall (1a) of said structural design component (1) arranged to, upon bending, being subject to negative pushing stresses. 15 20
8. A structural design component (1) according to any of claims 3 to 6,  
**characterized in that** said means for inducing local buckling comprise longitudinally spaced apart interconnections (3) between at least two of said sheet members (2a) and said delimiting wall (1a) of said structural design component (1) arranged to, upon bending, being subject to negative pushing stresses. 25 30
9. A structural design component (1) according to any of claims 4 to 6,  
**characterized in that** said means for inducing local buckling comprise longitudinally spaced apart interconnections (3) between at least two of said spacing sections (2b) and said delimiting wall (1a) of said structural design component (1) arranged to, upon bending, being subject to negative pushing stresses. 35 40
10. A structural design component (1) according to any one of the preceding claims,  
**characterized in that** said structural design component (1) is a sheet metal component and said means (2a) for maintaining the initial cross-section and said means (3) for inducing local buckling comprise sheet metal members. 45 50
11. A structural frame of a vehicle body,  
**characterized in that** it comprises a structural design component (1) according to any one of the preceding claims. 55
12. A vehicle,

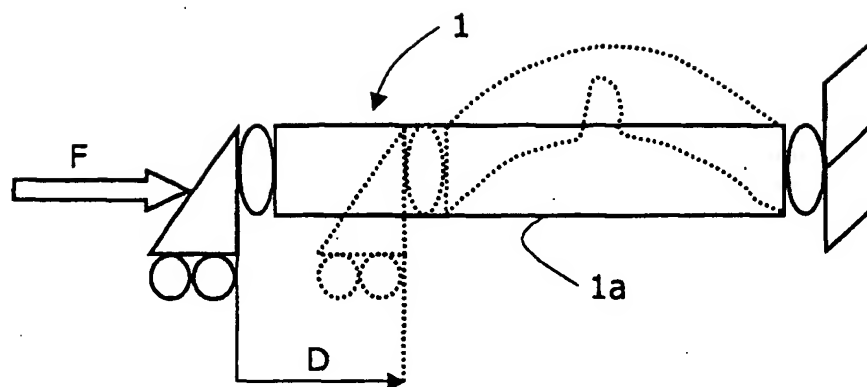


Fig. 1

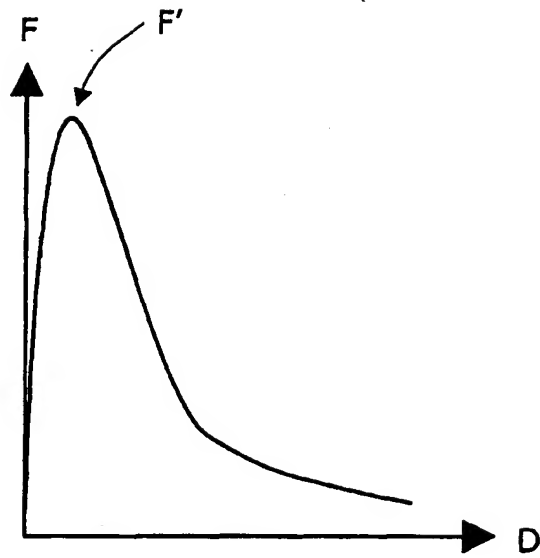


Fig. 2

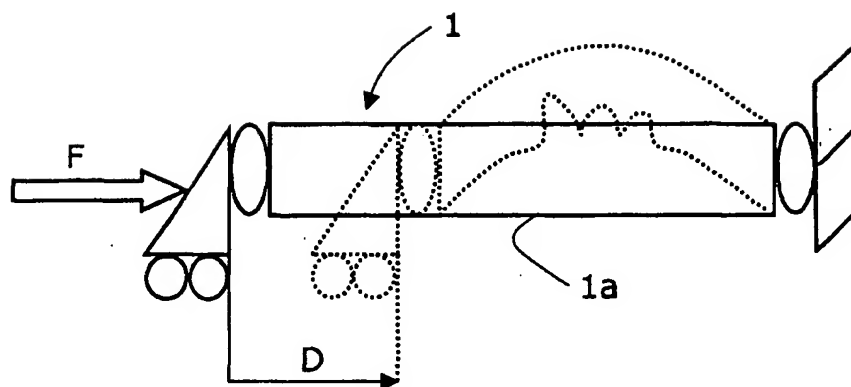


Fig. 3



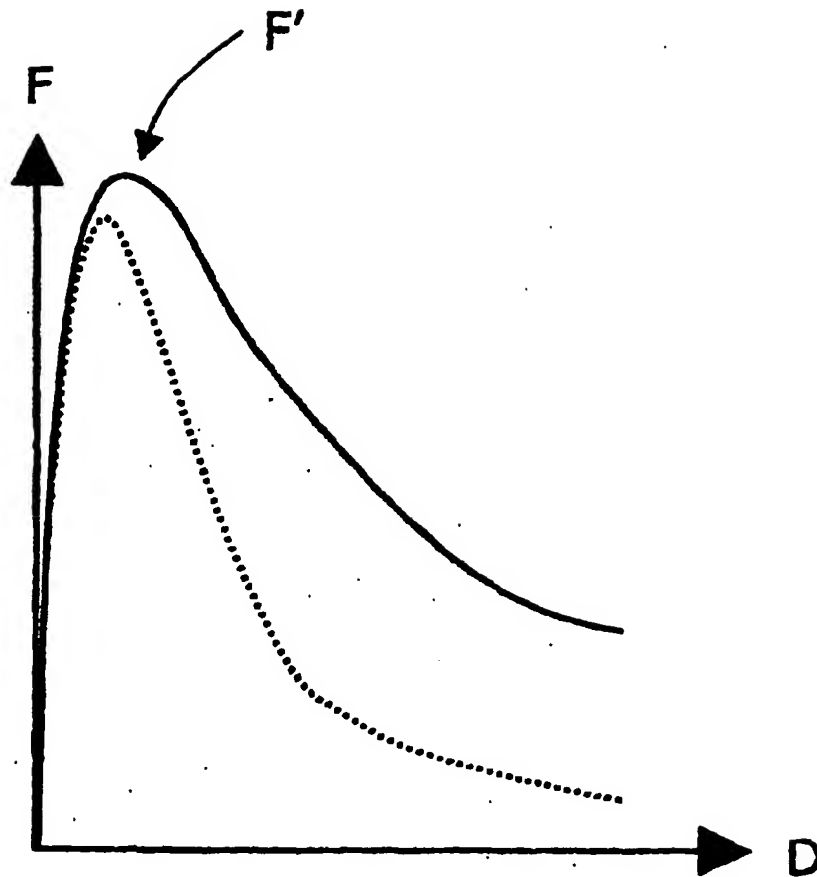


Fig. 4

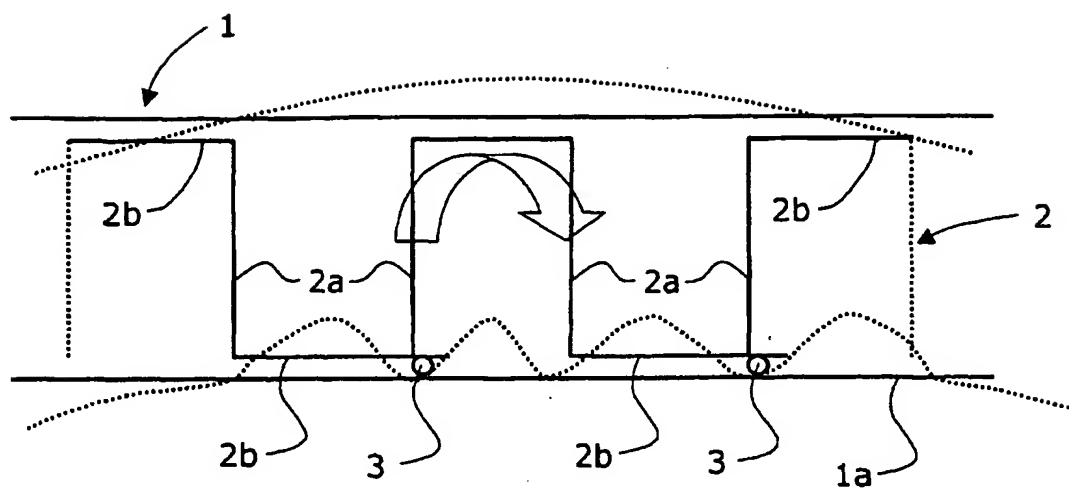


Fig. 5



European Patent  
Office

# EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number  
EP 03 00 1640

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int.Cl.7)
X	PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN vol. 1995, no. 04, 31 May 1995 (1995-05-31) -& JP 07 010033 A (MITSUBISHI MOTORS CORP), 13 January 1995 (1995-01-13) * abstract; figures *	1,3-6, 8-12	B62D21/15
A	---	2,7	
A,D	US 3 827 712 A (SUZUKI I ET AL) 6 August 1974 (1974-08-06) * the whole document *	1-12	
A	---		
A	PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN vol. 2000, no. 03, 30 March 2000 (2000-03-30) -& JP 11 342862 A (NISSAN MOTOR CO LTD), 14 December 1999 (1999-12-14) * abstract *	1,2,11, 12	
A	---		
A	PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN vol. 1995, no. 09, 31 October 1995 (1995-10-31) -& JP 07 149255 A (TOYOTA MOTOR CORP), 13 June 1995 (1995-06-13) * abstract *	1,3,11, 12	TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int.Cl.7) B62D B60R
A	---		
A	WO 01 19666 A (SAAB AB ;GUSTAVSSON MATS (SE)) 22 March 2001 (2001-03-22) * the whole document *	1,11,12	
A	---		
A	DE 197 31 284 A (BAYERISCHE MOTOREN WERKE AG) 28 January 1999 (1999-01-28) * the whole document *	1,3,11, 12	
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search MUNICH		Date of completion of the search 17 June 2003	Examiner Lecomte, D
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS X: particularly relevant if taken alone Y: particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A: technological background O: non-written disclosure P: intermediate document		T: theory or principle underlying the invention E: earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D: document cited in the application L: document cited for other reasons &: member of the same patent family, corresponding document	

EPO FORM 1503 03 02 (P04C01)

**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT  
ON EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION NO.**

EP 03 00 1640

This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned European search report. The members are as contained in the European Patent Office EDP file on  
The European Patent Office is in no way liable for these particulars which are merely given for the purpose of information.

17-06-2003

Patent document cited in search report		Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
JP 07010033	A	13-01-1995	NONE	
US 3827712	A	06-08-1974	JP 818283 C	09-06-1976
			JP 48064619 A	06-09-1973
			JP 50029209 B	22-09-1975
			DE 2254299 A1	20-06-1973
			GB 1400568 A	09-07-1975
JP 11342862	A	14-12-1999	NONE	
JP 07149255	A	13-06-1995	JP 3183009 B2	03-07-2001
WO 0119666	A	22-03-2001	SE 514790 C2	23-04-2001
			AU 7464900 A	17-04-2001
			WO 0119666 A1	22-03-2001
			SE 9903280 A	16-03-2001
DE 19731284	A	28-01-1999	DE 19731284 A1	28-01-1999

EPO FORM P0459

For more details about this annex : see Official Journal of the European Patent Office, No. 12/82